

**Draft Summary of the Environmental Work Group Meeting  
Oroville Facilities Relicensing (FERC Project No. 2100)  
June 26, 2002**

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) hosted a meeting for the Environmental Work Group on June 26, 2002 in Oroville.

A summary of the discussion, decisions made, and action items is provided below. This summary is not intended to be a transcript, analysis of the meeting, or to indicate agreement or disagreement with any of the items summarized, except where expressly stated. The intent is to present a summary for interested parties who could not attend the meeting. The following are attachments to this summary:

Attachment 1	Meeting Agenda
Attachment 2	Meeting Attendees
Attachment 3	Flip Chart Notes
Attachment 4	Study Plan F8: Transfer of Energy and Nutrients by Anadromous Fish Migrations
Attachment 5	Study Plan F3.1: Evaluation of Project Effects on Fish and Their Habitat within Lake Oroville, its Upstream Tributaries, the Thermalito Complex, and the Oroville Wildlife Area
Attachment 6	Guidance for the Study of Cumulative Impacts and Impacts on Species Listed Under the Federal Endangered Species Act
Attachment 7	Study Plan F2: Evaluation of Project Effects on Fish Diseases
Attachment 8	Study Plan F1: Evaluation of Project Effects on Non-fish Aquatic Resources

## **Introduction**

Attendees were welcomed to the Environmental Work Group meeting. Attendees introduced themselves and their affiliations; several people participated in the meeting at various times via conference call. The desired outcomes of the meeting were discussed as listed on the meeting agenda. The meeting agenda and list of meeting attendees are appended to this summary as Attachments 1 and 2, respectively. Meeting flip chart notes are included as Attachment 3.

## **Action Items – May 22, 2002 Environmental Work Group Meeting**

A summary of the May 22, 2002 Environmental Work Group meeting is posted on the relicensing web site. The Facilitator reviewed the status of action items from that meeting as follows:

<b>Action Item #E47</b>	Present the data management approach associated with this project to the Environmental Work Group ( <i>carry-over action item</i> ).
Status:	This presentation has not been scheduled to date due to the focus on completing study plans. This information will be presented once the study plans are complete.
<b>Action Item #E48</b>	Hold meeting to discuss proposed approach for SP-F9A and SP-F9B.
Status:	Steve Ford, Environmental Resource Area Manager (RAM) for DWR informed the Environmental Work Group that issues surrounding the hatchery study plan, SP-F9A / SP-F9B have not been resolved. However, some aspects of the literature review are proceeding in an effort to refine this study plan. A meeting is scheduled for DWR to meet with NMFS and FERC to discuss hatchery issues within the context of FERC relicensing. The Environmental Work Group will be briefed on the outcome of that meeting. DWR hopes to have a hatchery study plan drafted by the end of July for consideration by the full Environmental Work Group.

## **Update on Plenary Group Actions**

Steve Ford updated the Environmental Work Group on Plenary Group actions from their most recent meeting on June 25, 2002. The Plenary Group revisited conditionally approved study plans W2, W1, F2, F3.2, and T10. A discussion is still needed regarding some of the changes requested by NMFS and USFWS for SP-W2. Conceptually everyone is in agreement and SP-W2 was conditionally approved pending Environmental Work Group approval. SP-F2 was also conditionally approved pending Environmental Work Group approval at today's meeting. SP-W1, SP-F3.2 and SP-T10 were approved by the Plenary Group.

The Plenary Group conducted a 'heartburn' review of study plans F1, F3.1 and F8. No heartburn issues were identified with SP-F1 or SP-F3.1. A participant suggested that language related to the development of protection, mitigation, and enhancement measures (PM&Es) contained in SP-F8 is inconsistent with the other study plans that will not consider developing PM&Es at this stage of the process. SP-F8 was conditionally approved pending resolution of this issue at the Environmental Work Group level.

## **Study Plan Review**

Four study plans were scheduled for review during the June Environmental Work Group meeting: SP-F1, SP-3.1, SP-F8, and SP-F2.

### *SP- F8*

The current version of SP-F8 was distributed to the Environmental Work Group (see Attachment 4). There were past questions/concerns that SP-F8 was not a viable independent study plan, but because some components did not fit well into other study plans, portions of it remain a stand-alone study. It has been modified significantly through the task force process to make it more proportionate to the study objectives. As it currently stands, SP-F8 is intended to provide a frame of reference for historical spawning activity. It will provide historical reference points, information on escape records, and the current amount of spawning habitat upstream of Oroville facilities. It will primarily be used for the development of PM&Es. It was further clarified that the historical information generated by this study will be used to understand what exists now in terms of spawning habitat, not what could have been. The historical cutoff date for this study is 1944.

The Environmental Work Group addressed the Plenary Group's concern regarding the inclusion of a specific potential PM&E in the study objectives. Several options were considered to resolve this issue. The participants decided to change the text to recognize nutrient blockage as an on-going project impact and that there are no pre-determined PM&Es that this study is considering.

The study area was reviewed. One participant inquired why the study area only goes up to the high water mark. In response, it was explained that this study is not seeking to evaluate historical impacts. Further, the intent of this study is to collect information that can be used in the development of PM&Es.

The only other change to this study plan involved adding text to Task 2 of Section 5.0 to capture the concept of spawning density averages, specifically that the study will estimate average spawning density utilization and will evaluate a range of spawning densities.

### *SP- F3.1*

No additional changes were made and SP-F3.1 was approved. It is included as Attachment 5. At this point in the meeting, the agenda was modified and Item VI was discussed while awaiting the arrival of key participants to discuss the remaining two study plans.

## **Cumulative Approach / ESA Task Force Update**

Steve Ford reported on the Cumulative Impacts Approach/ESA Task Force efforts to develop a guidance document to assist study plan authors in the preparation of appropriate study plans to address cumulative impacts and ESA issues. He explained that although the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) had participated in the Task Force meetings until the last one, they decided that they were not comfortable with some of the language included in the draft and would not continue their involvement in the Task Force efforts to finish the document. Steve reported that both FWS and NMFS committed to submitting separate letters containing their ESA and cumulative guidance within 30 days and both agencies would try to make their individual letters consistent with each other. The agencies intend to remain involved in the other aspects of the collaborative process. In the interim, the Task Force and Environmental Work Group will proceed with the draft version of the guidance document which will also be distributed to the other work groups to use while developing study plan tasks to address cumulative effects and ESA issues. The other work groups will have the latitude to adjust the guidance document as it applies to their specific studies as long as their approach is consistent with the guidance document. At this point, no decision has been made regarding the ultimate format of the cumulative impact analysis. It may take the form of a separate study plan or possibly be included as an extra task in each of the existing study plans. It was clarified that impacts must be associated with this relicensing project before cumulative considerations are appropriate.

Wayne Dyok with the consulting team indicated that DWR and the consultants will identify resources which would potentially be cumulative affected by the project and will provide this list to the Environmental Work Group at their next meeting in July 2002. In addition, it was noted that SP-F15 will have a cumulative component that may be used as a model for discussion by the Environmental Work Group.

Concerns expressed by the participants on this issue include what projects to include in the cumulative impact analysis and whether the analysis would be quantitative or qualitative.

## **Study Plan Review (continued)**

### *SP- F2*

The current version of SP-F2 was distributed to the Work Group for review / discussion (see Attachment 7). Minor changes were made to the study plan text to reflect spelling changes and changes in reference dates. In addition, Section 5.0 was revised to include the Nimbus Hatchery on the American River. One participant indicated that there are health lab reports that can be made available to SWRI for use in this study. It was noted that because SP-F9 is still under consideration, certain aspects of that study plan might need to be evaluated under SP-F2; this issue will be tracked. A consideration to expedite the literature review was recommended at the last Environmental Work Group meeting however, due to staffing constraints this is likely not feasible; the October 2002 date for this task remained in the study plan.

### *SP- F1*

The current version of SP-F2 was distributed to the Environmental Work Group for review / discussion (see Attachment 8). No changes were made and the participants approved SP-F1.

## **Study Plan Implementation**

Steve Ford and Jerry Boles of DWR provided an update of the studies that have commenced. A summary of this information is presented below. In general, the Environmental Work Group appreciated the update process and suggested that in the future a one-page schedule (with milestones) be provided prior to the update. In addition, it was suggested to add an update on other aspects of the study plan implementation activities including obstacles that have been encountered to date.

#### *SP-W1*

- Data collection started in March
- On track

#### *SP-W2*

- Started sampling in end of May
- Coordination with CDFG schedule at Lake Oroville
- Sampled 5 locations
- Collecting fish from other locations in June
- Fish in post-spawn mode; difficult to catch
- Slightly behind schedule

#### *SP-W3*

- Survey of recreation facilities during first part of June 2002
- Started documenting information

#### *SP-W5*

- Comparable schedule to SP-W3
- Report anticipated by end of July
- Potential monitoring efforts

#### *SP-W6*

- Stations set up in March 2002
- In process of collecting data
- Some difficulty with recording equipment

#### *SP-W7*

- Gathering well information during prior week
- Initial stages proceeding well

#### *SP-W9*

- Has not started
- Anticipated start in several weeks
- Building probes for riffle component of study

#### *SP-F16*

- Most work completed in Phase 1
- Report is expected to be complete by July Environmental Work Group meeting

#### *SP-F10*

- Operating rotary screw traps to collect downstream migrant salmon
- Diver surveys to determine steelhead trout use of microhabitats
- Creel surveys to document the sport catch of fish

#### *SP-T2 (T & E species)*

- Wildlife studies - Began bird surveys such as bald eagle and Swainson's hawk. Some, such as the yellow-billed cuckoo, are waiting for the results of the veg mapping. We are writing a task order for the red-legged frog and giant garter snake surveys.
- Rare plant surveys - Some rare plant surveys have begun, mainly in the vernal pool areas.

#### *SP-T3/5 (Riparian and wetland resources)*

- The literature search is being conducted but no fieldwork will begin for a month or two.

#### *SP-T4 (Mapping)*

- Aerial photo preparation is completed
- Preliminary field work has begun for the vegetation and WHR mapping, both around the lake, OWA, and downstream Feather River
- Digitizing from aerial photos of the veg types and preliminary WHR types is in progress

#### *SP-T7 (Noxious weeds)*

- Mapping of noxious weed species has started. This field work has been combined with the mapping (T4) field work

#### *SP-G1 + G2*

- Development of a bibliography of relevant resources, such as maps, photos, surveys, reports, etc.
- Fieldwork began on June 3, with assistance from Northern District engineers, to field locate cross-sections and survey monuments below the fish diversion dam.
- Fieldwork will be initiated next week also to locate the hubs for the lake cross-section surveys.

### ***Modeling Review***

The Modeling Protocol Task Force is in process of preparing model summaries for all of the models under consideration. A template has been prepared, which provides for information on assumptions, inputs, outputs and limitations of each model.

### **Next Steps / Meetings**

The Environmental Work Group agreed on the following meeting date/time:

Date: Wednesday, July 24, 2002  
 Time: 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
 Location: Kelly Ridge Golf Course Meeting Room

The Environmental Study Plan Development Task Force participants agreed to meet in August on the following date/time:

Date: Tuesday, August 6, 2002  
 Time: 9:30 a.m. -3:30 p.m.  
 Location: Oroville Field Division  
 (At the July 2, 2002 Task Force Meeting, the meeting date was changed to August 7, 2002)

### **Action Items**

The following list of action items identified by the Environmental Work Group includes a description of the action, the participant responsible for the action, and item status.

**Action Item #E49:** Provide comments on Cumulative Impact Approach/ESA guidance document to Steve Ford (DWR)  
**Responsible:** Environmental Work Group Participants  
**Due Date:** July 10, 2002

- Action Item #E50:** Confirm “comfort level” for SP-F8 changes approved by Environmental Work Group with Eric Theiss (NMFS) and Ron Davis.  
**Responsible:** Steve Ford (DWR)  
**Due Date:** prior to July 2002 Plenary Group meeting
- Action Item #E51:** Provide draft list of cumulative issues at July Environmental Work Group meeting for discussion.  
**Responsible:** DWR  
**Due Date:** July 24, 2002
- Action Item #E52:** Consider one-page summary document as an update on study plan implementation to the Environmental Work Group.  
**Responsible:** DWR  
**Due Date:** Next update
- Action Item #E53:** Track SP-F9 in order to ensure that hatchery considerations are evaluated, potentially under SP-F2.  
**Responsible:** DWR  
**Due Date:** As SP-F9 is developed.